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ABSTRACT

This document reports on a 2001 Australian summit on teacher standards, quality, and professionalism. This invitational activity included approximately 50 senior policymakers, researchers, and practicing teachers who participated in two workshops involving international experts. They identified where the profession should be in relation to teaching standards, quality, and professionalism in 5 years. The summit emphasized the extensive work that has already occurred in such areas as training, research, and professional development. Strengthening the profession can be achieved using a process of continuous development and effective mechanisms for teacher recruitment and retention. The challenge defined by the summit is to understand and operate effectively within both professional and political contexts. The summit recommends that resources and efforts be directed toward ensuring that all teachers are engaged, supported, and accountable in relation to teacher standards, quality, and professionalism. Three key areas for action are professional teaching standards, engaging the profession, and national commitment and support. Proposed next steps include: participant dissemination of this working document; promotion by the Australian College of Education of a common, unifying agenda and action on teacher standards, quality, and professionalism; and identification by stakeholders of individual and collective strategies to use in advancing this agenda. (SM)

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ED 457 126

Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism

Working Document

Outcomes from a National Professional Summit

Australian College of Education

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Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism
WORKING DOCUMENT
Outcomes from a National Professional Summit

CONTEXT

A Professional Summit on teacher standards, quality and professionalism was held in Canberra on 5-6 April 2001. With the support of many groups including the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, this invitational activity involved around 50 participants from professional and industrial organisations, as well as systems and sectors nation wide.

Facilitated by Mr Tony Mackay, senior policy makers, researchers and practising teachers were involved in two workshops involving international experts — Dr Ralph Tabberer (UK) and Dr Margaret Wilson (Canada) — with a view to identifying where the profession should be in relation to teacher standards, quality and professionalism in the medium term (e.g. five years).

This document constitutes a significant outcome of the Summit, given that it captures the view of participants regarding the need for an action-oriented approach to further development. It needs to be emphasised that this is an ongoing process, and that all groups working to support quality teaching are encouraged to use this statement within and beyond their own settings. In other words, this is a working document to be refined and extended in a context of cooperative action.

PREAMBLE

Improving the quality of teaching and ultimately the education and training outcomes for young Australians has been on the agenda of the teaching profession for many years. Considerable emphasis was placed during the Summit on the extensive work that has already been undertaken by professional associations, employers, unions and other groups in areas such as training, research and professional development.

It is possible to identify a set of draft principles upon which much of this activity has been based, and which should underpin all future work. For example, work on teacher standards, quality and professionalism should:

- be in the public interest as well as in the interests of the teaching profession;
- be firmly grounded in an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the nature of teachers' work;
- be transparent and accessible to the profession and the wider community;
- improve the public perception of and regard for teachers and their work;
- strengthen the perception of teaching as a desirable career path;
- be owned and driven by the profession in partnership with key stakeholders;
- focus on higher levels of knowledge, understanding, skills and professional values rather than on minimum competencies;
- reflect a continuum of teacher development (e.g. from beginning to retirement), allowing for possibilities of different points/stages of entry and re-entry); and
- protect the integrity and status of teachers' qualifications.

However, a window of opportunity exists at present to build and extend this work in a spirit of cooperation, given the coalescence of circumstances surrounding current and projected work on teacher standards, quality and professionalism including:

- ministerial reviews and consultation processes concerned with teaching and teacher education;
- establishment/further development of teacher registration bodies and institutes of teaching;
- research and development on professional teaching standards;
- demonstrated leadership by the teaching profession on teacher standards, quality and professionalism;

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- support for the profession from education systems, sectors and other groups;
- an expanding range of resources on quality/accomplished/innovative teaching;
- emerging teacher shortages and an ageing teaching population;
- international developments on teacher standards, quality and professionalism;
- the importance of transparency; and
- a new sense of urgency.

An orientation towards 'cooperative action' is central to the development and sustainability of quality teaching. A demonstrated commitment to the implementation of professional teaching standards and evidence-based approaches will ensure that substantial gains are made. For example, significant outcomes can be achieved in relation to teacher morale, quality and professionalism on the one hand, along with student learning and performance on the other. There is a common view that the voice of the profession in this country should provide strong leadership with regard to policy, planning, implementation and related matters concerned with the training, development and recognition of teachers. That is, the profession should set the agenda for this important debate.

From now on, a significant part of our collaborative work should be on developing closer links between all stakeholders in the education profession: governments, systems, education faculties, professional associations, registration authorities, employers, unions and the wider community — at local, state and national levels. Achieving success will require strengthening of existing partnerships as well as forging new alliances in order to generate improved outcomes for our students, teachers, parents, the wider educational community, and society as a whole.

CHALLENGES

Strengthening the teaching profession can be achieved through two complementary strategies:

(a) a process of *continuous development* — designed to increase the individual and collective capacity of the profession to sustain quality teaching and learning; and

(b) effective mechanisms for *teacher recruitment and retention* — designed to increase the number of accomplished teachers nation-wide.

The challenge, as defined throughout the Professional Summit, is to understand and operate effectively within both 'professional' and 'political' contexts (see Figure 1).

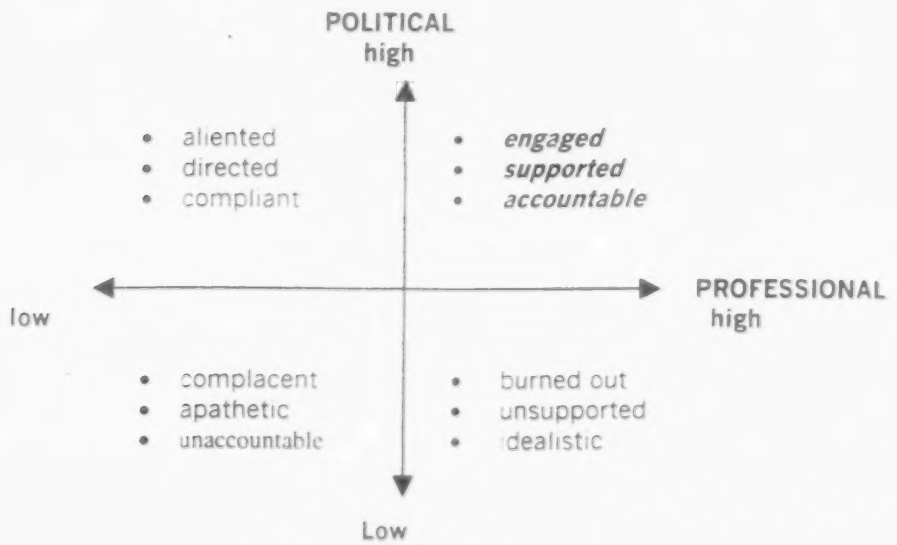

Figure 1 Characteristics of teachers operating in political/professional contexts

Failure to meet this challenge is likely to result in a further decline in teacher morale, along with increased difficulty in attracting and retaining members of the teaching profession. Hence, energies and resources should be directed towards ensuring that all teachers are engaged, supported and accountable in relation to teacher standards, quality and professionalism (i.e. operating in the upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 1).

There are three key areas for action — professional teaching standards; engaging the profession; and national commitment and support — which involve a range of stakeholders (e.g. registration authorities, employers, unions, professional organisations, teacher education bodies).

1. Professional standards

The meaning of professional teaching standards should be clarified and then developed at four levels, namely:

- teacher training (pre-service);
- beginning (entry);
- effective; and
- advanced.

These standards should be developed, implemented and assessed through and by the profession and lead to career path enhancement taking into consideration:

- pay;
- prospects;
- personal growth; and
- life style.

2. Engaging the profession

The profession should play a central role in the development of professional teaching standards, their implementation and monitoring and in advocating their use. Integral to success is ensuring that the whole profession, across all sectors, systems and jurisdictions understands and is engaged in the process of continuous development with regard to quality teaching and learning.

3. National commitment and support

The profession should advocate for a 'nationally agreed' framework of purposes and principles for the development of professional teaching standards. The term nationally agreed was chosen deliberately because although responsibility for education lies with the States and Territories, a reasonably consistent set of standards may emerge around Australia through cooperation and collaboration among these jurisdictions. This framework should:

- connect with state, territory and national public and professional policies;
- acknowledge recent and current projects and activities (at state, national and international levels);
- help to generate political will, commitment and connections;
- be the basis upon which generic, subject/curriculum specific or developmental level standards can be developed;
- draw upon the full range of available research, scholarship and consultation processes; and
- identify champions from both within and beyond the profession.

For example, in collaboration with key stakeholders, the teaching profession could draft, a 'Declaration' on quality teaching that builds on the Adelaide Declaration, and acts as a benchmark for professionalism and professional teaching standards nation-wide. The declaration could then be presented to MCEETYA for endorsement. Another possibility would be to initiate a 'national campaign' to identify and celebrate aspects of quality teaching (e.g. 'What makes a good teacher?')

NEXT STEPS

After an evaluation of the Summit and a redrafting of this document, the following steps have been proposed to ensure that the enthusiasm and momentum generated during the Summit are maintained:

- all participants will be invited to disseminate and promote discussion of this Working Document within their own constituencies to generate cooperative action on teacher standards, quality and professionalism (e.g. web sites, professional development activities, networks, newsletters);
- the Australian College of Education will be encouraged to continue its 'honest broker' role to establish and promote a common, unifying agenda and action on teacher standards, quality and professionalism (e.g. data analysis, information dissemination, meetings, focus groups, conferences);
- as many stakeholders as possible will be invited to identify individual and collective strategies that might be employed to advance this common and unifying agenda (e.g. using a framework of What? When? Where? How?);
- the Australian College of Education will be encouraged to continue to act as a 'clearinghouse' (e.g. by preparing 'national audits' of research and development; compiling registers of relevant documents and materials etc).

NOTES

- *Following validation by Summit Participants, this 'Working Document' was released on 1 June 2001 with a view to further refinement and extension in a context of cooperative action. All stakeholders are encouraged to promote and discuss the above contents within and beyond their constituencies in order to generate reactions, ideas and proposals. An individual, organisation or collective, for example, could prepare a formal response; suggest a process for broader consultation; or simply provide a statement of endorsement.*

- *It is requested that respondents direct their attention in the first instance towards the three areas that have been identified for action — professional standards; engaging the profession; and national commitment and support.*

- *It will be important that liaison with national councils and committees with a brief that includes teacher standards, quality and professionalism be maintained during this exercise (e.g. CESCEO, MCEETYA etc)*

- *It is proposed that a period of four months be designated for the further refinement and extension of the Working Document (i.e. 1 June – 30 September 2001) and that the Australian College of Education act as the clearinghouse through which responses to the document can be accessed and collated.*

- *For further information, please contact Christine Owen, Australian College of Education, PO Box 323 Deakin West ACT 2600 (02) 6281 1677 cowen@austcolled.com.au*

- A number of related documents can be accessed via the College website http://www.austcolled.com.au/projects.html (please click on Teacher Professional Standards Project). For example, further outcomes from the Summit include a *National Audit* and a *Document Register* on teacher standards, quality and professionalism. See also the national discussion paper *Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms*, together with an *A Analysis of Responses*.

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*Final Date for responses to the Working Document – **1 October 2001***